

BONE PLATE HAVING A PORTION ADAPTED TO OVERLIE A FASTENER

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Related Applications

This application is a continuation of application Serial No. 10/253,678, filed September 24, 2002, ^{NOW U.S. PATENT NO. 6,916,320,} which is a divisional of 09/754,733, filed January 4, 2001, now U.S. Patent No. 6,454,771, which is a continuation of application Serial No. 09/022,293, filed February 11, 1998, now U.S. Patent No. 6,193,721, which claims the benefit of U.S. provisional application Serial No. 60/037,139, filed February 11, 1997; all of which are incorporated herein by reference. Application Serial No. 09/022,344, filed February 11, 1998, now U.S. Patent No. 6,139,550, is incorporated herein by reference.

2. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates generally to implants, method, and instrumentation for fusion of the human cervical spine from the anterior aspect, and in particular to plate systems for aligning and maintaining adjacent cervical vertebrae in a selected spatial relationship during spinal fusion of those vertebrae.

3. Description of the Related Art

It is current practice in the art to use cervical plating systems for this purpose. Such systems are composed essentially of plates and screws for aligning and holding vertebrae in a desired position relative to one another. The earliest such devices consisted of stainless steel plates and screws and required that the screws passed entirely through the vertebrae and into the spinal canal in order to engage the strong